FIELD NOTE

Architecture in the Age of the Spanish Habsburgs

JESÚS ESCOBAR
Northwestern University

First published in 1949 and revised in 1966, Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* offered a sweeping exploration of social history and geography in the late sixteenth century.[1] Braudel used the long reign of Philip II (r. 1556–98) as a temporal framework for his study. He also employed the image of the Spanish Habsburg king to push his analysis beyond the geographic limits of the Mediterranean Sea to the larger globe, given that Philip had overseen the "first economic and political system that spanned the known world."[2] Building was one of the primary activities of this global political system and yet something that we know little about in early modern architectural history, given the narrowing lenses of nationalist history. Through these lenses, Spain is defined by its modern-day borders and conventional periodization, which, among other things, views colonial architecture in Latin America as always derivative of developments in Europe. In the same way that the age of Philip II served Braudel as a lens onto a wider world, the reign of the Spanish Habsburgs from 1516 to 1700 offers a useful frame for understanding the dynamics of architecture and urbanism in territories across its vast domain.

A revised framework allows us to rethink long-standing approaches to the study of early modern European and European colonial architecture, especially in English-language scholarship, which is the focus of this essay. For instance, standard period and stylistic labels are limited when it comes to the architecture of the Spanish world. To begin, normative histories of architecture teach us that the Renaissance came late to Spain.[3] Lingering medieval practices and forms found there around 1500 make Spain similar to places such as France, Germany, and England, where what Matt Kavaler calls a "Renaissance Gothic" style was the rule of the day.[4] Judged against developments in Central Italy, whose Renaissance forms the traditional measure in scholarship, sixteenth-century Spanish—not to mention Spanish colonial—architecture seems retrograde. Its ornament, too, has been misunderstood, with debates over its origins in an imperial Roman versus more a recent Islamic past.[5]

Scholarship on baroque architecture is no less problematic when it comes to traditional period labels. The only English-language survey of early modern Iberian and Ibero-American architecture was published in 1959 by George Kubler.[6] For Kubler, the singular monument of the sixteenth century was Philip II's Escorial, a monastery-palace complex built at the foot of the mountains northwest of Madrid from 1563 to 1584. According to Kubler, the Escorial's austere classical design cast a long shadow on the architecture of the first half of the seventeenth century in Spain, and also Portugal. Following a historiographical scheme laid out by eighteenth-century neoclassical critics, Kubler denigrated the architecture of the later seventeenth century—and, by implication, the rule of the late Spanish Habsburgs—for its ornamental qualities. In the early 1970s, the architect and critic Christian Norberg-Schulz went further, concluding in a survey of European baroque architecture that Spanish buildings "in and of themselves contribute nothing of importance to the history of architecture."[7]

In response to my complaint about the limits of the term *baroque* as applied to seventeenth-century architecture in the Spanish world, historian Richard Kagan asked me if anyone has considered calling these buildings Spanish Habsburg.[8]

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 75, no. 3 (September 2016), 258–262, ISSN 0037-9808, electronic ISSN 2150-5926. © 2016 by the Society of Architectural Historians. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints, or via email: jpermissions@ucpress.edu. DOI: 10.1525/jsah.2016.75.3.258.

Exploring this question further, in this essay I propose that the term *Spanish Habsburg architecture* provides us with a more nuanced political history of architecture in the early modern Spanish world than what has existed until now. The term challenges us to think broadly about buildings and public spaces as reflective of Spanish imperial governance, defined by historian Gabriel Paquette as "the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, which need not be conducted exclusively by the state, and which guide and restrain the collective activity of groups and individuals."[9] Additionally, the term *Spanish Habsburg* escapes today's temporal and geographic boundaries, allowing us to better approximate the early modern world in which monuments and cities emerged via an exchange of people and ideas about architecture on a global scale.

The dominion of the Spanish Habsburgs came into existence when the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was crowned Carlos I of Spain in 1516. The lands ruled over by Charles and his heirs comprised kingdoms, duchies, and client states, as well as frontier outposts that would eventually span the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The realm was fashioned as a *monarchia universalis*, a concept inspired by the medieval ideal of a Christian reunification of the former Roman Empire.[10] Although they governed from a royal court—situated permanently in Madrid after 1561—the Spanish Habsburgs relied on a decentralized power structure of viceroys, magistrates, and royal officials who were stationed in a network of cities, from Seville to Brussels and from Naples to Mexico City. As a result, Spanish Habsburg administrators absorbed and accommodated a range of local political practices. Likewise, there is great variety in what can be called Spanish Habsburg architecture, material evidence of the monarchy's makeup as a composite empire of cities in which local conditions were acknowledged and even celebrated.

Current research in the production, transfer, and exchange of knowledge in the early modern period informs my proposed use of the term *Spanish Habsburg*. Much of this work is collaborative, and some of it, like the Palatium program's research on the uses and design of European palaces, is being published digitally.[11] As an example of innovative scholarship in a more traditional format, many of the volumes in the Architectura Moderna series published by Brepols disrupt modern European political borders—those separating Belgium and the Netherlands in particular—in their exploration of architectural design, practice, and exchange.[12] Another singular contribution to the study of the Spanish Habsburg world is being made by the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica in Madrid. Although primarily dedicated to understanding European places under the direct and informal control of Spain, many of the center's publications have also incorporated the larger transatlantic empire.[13] The same transnational impulse informs research in a range of fields exploring what has been called the Hispanic baroque.[14] Although the empire of the Spanish Habsburgs was vast and architectural knowledge traveled across it in multiple directions, I see commonalities in the ways the monarchy represented itself in built form and the mechanisms by which it did so.[15]

Spanish Habsburg Classicism

In the late 1980s, Manfredo Tafuri, a leading voice in Italian early modern and modern architectural history, began to explore cultural exchange between Italy and Spain in the sixteenth century. In 1992, he published what he labeled a hypothetical study of the Palace of Charles V in Granada, a building long considered enigmatic given its avant-garde classical design dating to the late 1520s.[16] Seeking to overturn nationalist traditions that credited the building's design to the Spanish architect Pedro Machuca, Tafuri considered the architecture of the palace in conjunction with the contemporary Granada Cathedral, which was built in a classical manner by another Spaniard, Diego Siloé, in the heart of the recently conquered Muslim city. Granada offered Tafuri an opportunity to consider the ideological implications of the introduction of classical architecture to that city by agents of the Spanish Habsburg monarch, including ambassadors and humanists as well as architects. Ultimately, Tafuri concluded that the design of the Palace of Charles V was Italian in origin and linked to the architect Giulio Romano at the papal court in Rome.

Tafuri's separation of Italy and Spain as distinct cultural spheres is hard to uphold today. Donato Bramante's Tempietto—long considered to be the foundational monument for the classical tradition in Renaissance architecture—is exemplary of the ways in which recent scholarship understands a deeper connectedness between Spain and Italy. In a widely debated book of 2001, *Spanish Rome, 1500–1700*, historian Thomas Dandelet argued that the papal city in the early modern period was close to being a client state of the Spanish Habsburgs.[17] Rome experienced what Dandelet termed "informal imperialism," by contrast with the more direct and violent forms of Habsburg rule in places such as Granada, Cuzco, and Tenochtitlan. The dust jacket of Dandelet's book included an image of the Tempietto, an example of Spanish patronage in Rome. Jack Freiberg's 2014 study of the Tempietto underscores the involvement of Spaniards in the building of this monument and their critical role in the creation of a work of architecture that has come to embody Renaissance classicism at its inception.[18] Freiberg's microhistorical approach introduces a cast of historical figures, led by the Spanish cardinal Bernardino López de Carvajal (1455–1523), who worked in conjunction with other prelates during the reign of a

Spanish pope, Alexander VI (r. 1492–1503), and afterward to promote the ideals of the Spanish crown as defender of the Catholic faith.

Realized in the early decades of the sixteenth century under the rule of Charles V's grandparents Fernando and Isabel, the Tempietto blended antique-inspired forms—what Spaniards called architecture *a lo romano*—and Christian ornament. It served as a model for Spanish Habsburg civic and religious monuments in Madrid and Toledo as well as Granada.[19] From the outset, classical architecture was employed deliberately to express Spanish Habsburg power. Classical forms adorned the ephemeral arches erected to celebrate Charles V in Bologna in 1530 as well as those built for Philip II's entry to Antwerp as prince in 1549. Philip referred to the use of classical architecture in the 1552 royal privilege granted Francisco de Villalpando for his translation of the *Third and Fourth Books on Architecture* by Sebastiano Serlio. Philip wrote of the book's utility for "the buildings that are to be erected in these, our realms."[20] The monarch's words attest to the potential of architectural monuments to extol allegiance to the Spanish Habsburg crown.

When Tafuri wrote about Granada around 1990, he was perhaps unaware of a rising field of scholarship dedicated to Latin American colonial art and the ideological forces at work in the absorption of indigenous architectural traditions into new Spanish Habsburg places. What happens when we consider the imposition of classical architecture in Granada through a wider lens? In the 1540s, as Granada's cathedral took shape in Andalucía, a classical portal was erected before another new cathedral in the Caribbean city of Santo Domingo in today's Dominican Republic. Above a twin doorway separated by a fluted column, rounded arches were covered with sculpted forms, including allegorical, religious, and political symbols. The largest and most prominent of these symbols was the imperial crest of Charles V, the same crest that adorned the entrance to the emperor's new Granada palace. The synchronous use of classical architecture at Granada and Santo Domingo is an example of the commonalities to be found in Spanish Habsburg architecture that have gone largely unremarked owing to artificial, nationalist histories. In his 1959 survey, for instance, George Kubler separated the architecture of Spain from that of Portugal and also the American colonies. We need to think now about buildings emerging simultaneously across oceans to uncover the processes behind Spanish Habsburg architectural and urban design.

Classical architecture took on many variants in the early modern period, a point emphasized by Christy Anderson in her 2013 survey of Renaissance architecture in Europe that pushes against the paradigm of Central Italy.[21] One variant of classicism in the Spanish world not treated by Anderson is the *estilo austriaco*, or Habsburg style, invented by Philip II and his architects in the 1560s for projects in and around Madrid.[22] The style employed local building traditions, which favored corner towers and large portals. It was also informed by the Italian classicism promoted in Serlio's books and by Flemish materials, including especially fired brick and slate. Drawing on sources from Spain, Italy, and the Low Countries, the *estilo austriaco* mirrored the composite nature of the Spanish Habsburg monarchy, and, like the monarchy, it evolved over time. The Escorial, the greatest Habsburg monument to survive, was built completely in granite. Likewise, the main façade of the Royal Palace in Madrid, the reform of which began with a brick tower in the 1560s, was redesigned in stone during the reign of Philip III (r. 1598–1621). When the members of the labor force that constructed the Escorial dispersed, they carried a lasting model for Spanish Habsburg buildings in Castile. Churches, town halls, bridges, and public works of all sorts were created in the image of the Escorial well into the second quarter of the seventeenth century. By the 1630s, Philip IV (r. 1621–65) pursued Escorial-inspired designs for major civic buildings not only for formal reasons but also for the political associations with what were perceived to be the glory days of Philip II.[23]

Migration of Architectural Forms and Ideas

Monarchical ideals of good government and justice were promoted in the design of the Royal Palace of Madrid, and likewise in the viceregal seats of government in Mexico City, Naples, and Lima. As in Madrid, these palaces served as residences for royal governors and provided courtrooms and other spaces for the ceremonies and institutions of governance, some of which were even decorated in a manner similar to the Madrid palace.[24] The disposition of suites of interconnected rooms around courtyards and the combination of residential and administrative functions in a single building is not unusual in the history of early modern architecture, but it is one component of a typology of Spanish Habsburg palaces that merits deeper investigation. To this end, Michael Schreffler and I are at work on a comparative study of royal palaces in the monarchy's nine viceroyalties, with a goal of exploring the processes of knowledge transmission that made this shared architectural programming possible.

As the costliest undertakings of the Spanish Habsburg imperial project, architecture and public works were employed to forge consensus around the monarchy as the guarantor of religious stability and good government. To understand the links between places in this vast political domain, scholars have to confront the matter of migration of architectural forms and ideas. Architectural books such as Serlio's served practical ends and also contributed theoretical as well as ethical ideas about the role of public buildings in early modern

cities. Like their readers, these books were mobile. Printed architectural images, too, traveled widely. As the Escorial neared completion, its head architect, Juan de Herrera (ca. 1530–97), prepared a series of drawings of the complex —plans, sections, and elevations—for printing and distribution.[25] The dissemination of these engravings was crucial to the building's success as a model for religious architecture in places as far apart as Lisbon and Quito.

In the early 1580s, Herrera worked with other court artists and scientists to establish the Royal Academy of Mathematics in Madrid, which would offer instruction in a range of subjects, including architecture. Connected to the establishment of the academy, translations of critical architectural texts by Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti were commissioned; these texts, printed in 1582, were used for teaching at court and were sent to distant parts of the monarchy.[26] Evidence of the circulation of architectural books, prints, and drawings can be found throughout the early modern Spanish world. Mendicant friars were some of the earliest transmitters of architectural ideas to Mexico in the early decades of the sixteenth century, and they were succeeded by royal officials, builders, and bureaucrats such as notaries and scribes, whose writings reveal a mastery of theoretical notions about architecture and the city. Likewise, ordinances issued from the Spanish Habsburg court gave shape to new towns, as well as to ideas about the monuments that adorned these places far and wide, to promote the idea that a well-ordered city reflected a well-governed polity.[27]

When considered within the global reach of the Spanish Habsburg Empire, the standard narrative of early modern architectural history concerned with nationalist traditions and stylistic developments begins to feel limited, and the absence of the Spanish world is difficult to justify. In his classic study with which I opened this essay, Fernand Braudel demanded that the Mediterranean "be accepted as a wide zone, extending well beyond the shores of the sea in all directions."[28] Likewise, Spanish Habsburg architecture should be understood as a phenomenon surpassing the limits of the court city of Madrid and the ever-changing political borders of Spain in the early modern period. This cultural zone was shaped by people, books, and ideas about architecture that circulated in multiple directions and came together to form new monuments. Some Spanish Habsburg places felt the impact of imperial rule more directly than others, but in all of them architecture was the product of the forces of local dynamics at work in the global empire that was the early modern Spanish world.

Notes

1. This essay emerges from my long-standing engagement with the historiography of Spanish baroque architecture, which began with a paper I delivered at the Annual Conference of the College Art Association in Boston in February 2006. Sabina De Cavi, David Friedman, Richard Kagan, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Alina Payne, John Pinto, and Michael Schreffler have offered especially helpful comments in the years since, and I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Patricia Morton for her editorial guidance with this essay.

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., 2nd rev. ed., trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

2. Ibid., 1:374.

3. Only the Escorial, a building begun in 1563, appears consistently in English-language surveys of European Renaissance architecture. Christy Anderson notes that the history of Renaissance architecture in general "has primarily been the story of architectural classicism as it developed in central Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." Christy Anderson, *Renaissance Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

4. Ethan Matt Kavaler, *Renaissance Gothic: Architecture and the Arts in Northern Europe, 1470–1540* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012).

5. The debate over ornament was tackled decades ago by Earl E. Rosenthal, "The Image of Roman Architecture in Renaissance Spain," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 52 (1958), 329–46. Recent scholarship offers nuanced interpretations on the Islamic legacy in early modern Spanish literature and art. See Barbara Fuchs, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Cynthia Robinson, "Towers, Birds and Divine Light: The Contested Territory of Nasrid and 'Mudéjar' Ornament," *Medieval Encounters* 17, nos. 1–2 (2011), 27–79.

6. George Kubler, "Part 1: Architecture," in *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800*, by George Kubler and Martin Soria (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), 1–119.

7. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Arquitectura barroca* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1972), 327.

8. In 2006, Sabina De Cavi organized a panel for the SAH annual conference in Savannah titled "Architecture in the Spanish Habsburg World: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," for which I served as respondent. Paper topics touched upon places as widely dispersed as Madrid, Lerma, Scherpenheuvel, Palermo, Goa, and Guanajuato.

9. Gabriel B. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and Its Empire, 1759–1808* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11.

10. On the concept of universal monarchy, see Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995); and also J. H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies" (1992), in *Spain, Europe and the Wider World, 1500–1800* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 3–24.

11. Palatium labels itself a research networking program and operates under the full title Court Residences as Places of Exchange in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe 1400–1700. Its digital publications can be accessed at http://www.courtresidences.eu/index.php/home.

12. An especially provocative volume in the series is Krista De Jonge and Konrad Ottenheym, eds., *Unity and Discontinuity: Architectural Relationships between the Southern and Northern Low Countries (1530–1700)* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007). The series is inspired in part by a renewed interest in geography; see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

13. CEEH volumes that focus on places, including Bologna, Genoa, and Naples, are especially useful in this regard, as many of these cities' ruling elites had direct ties to Iberian and transatlantic cities in the empire. See, for instance, José Luis Colomer, ed., *España y Nápoles: Coleccionismo y mecenazgo virreinales en el siglo XVII* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2009).

14. Much of this research pertains to literary scholarship. For a broader, multidisciplinary introduction to the concept, see Evonne Levy and Kenneth Mills, eds., *Lexikon of the Hispanic Baroque: Transatlantic Exchange and Transformation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

15. Useful here is the proposal that we write "global microhistories of architecture." See Swati Chattopadhyay, "The Globality of Architectural History," *JSAH* 74, no. 4 (Dec. 2015), 411–15.

16. Manfredo Tafuri, "La Granada di Carlo V: Il palazzo, il mausoleo," in *Ricerca del Rinascimento: Principi, cittá, architetti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), 255–304. The essay originally appeared in 1987 and was reworked for the Einaudi volume. For an English translation, see Manfredo Tafuri, "The Granada of Charles V: Palace and Mausoleum," in *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*, trans. Daniel Sherer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, in association with Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2006), 181–217.

17. Thomas James Dandelet, *Spanish Rome: 1500–1700* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001).

18. Jack Freiberg, *Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

19. For a model microhistorical approach to the history of Spanish architecture, see Fernando Marías, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Toledo (1541–1631)*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1983–85).

20. Sebastiano Serlio, *Tercero y quarto libros de arquitectura*, trans. Francisco de Villalpando (Tòledo: Juan de Ayala, 1552), fol. A i.

21. Anderson, *Renaissance Architecture*.

22. On the *estilo austriaco*, see Krista De Jonge, "Antiquity Assimilated: Court Architecture, 1530–1560," in De Jonge and Ottenheym, *Unity and Discontinuity*, 60–61.

23. On these associations, which I am developing further in a new book project, see J. H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).

24. On the decoration of seventeenth-century interiors in the Royal Palace of Mexico City, see Michael Schreffler, *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 37–58. On the Royal Palace in Naples, see Sabina De Cavi, *Architecture and Royal Presence: Domenico and Giulio Cesare Fontana in Spanish Naples (1592–1627)* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 159–212.

25. Catherine Wilkinson-Zerner, *Juan de Herrera: Architect to Philip II of Spain* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 84–115.

26. Beatriz Blasco Esquivias sheds important new light on this understudied academy in *Arquitectos y tracistas: El triunfo del barroco en la corte de los Austrias* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2013). On the theoretical writings of Spanish architects, see Antonio Bonet Correa, *Figuras, modelos e imágenes en los tratadistas españoles* (Madrid: Alianza Forma, 1993).

27. Jesús Escobar, "Toward an *urbanismo austriaco*: An Examination of Sources for Urban Planning in the Spanish Habsburg World," in *Early Modern Urbanism and the Grid: Town Planning in the Low Countries in International Context*, ed. Piet Lombaerde and Charles van den Heuvel (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), 161–75.

28. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1:168.